



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko, Nevada**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Hubbard Vineyard Allotment Grazing Permit Renewal Decision
DOI-BLM-NV-N030-2010-0003-EA**

Based on the environmental assessment (EA) for the Grazing Permit Renewal Decision for the Hubbard Vineyard Allotment (DOI-BLM-NV-N030-2010-0003-EA), I have determined that the Proposed Action, as described and analyzed in the EA, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required prior to my issuance of the decision.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts as discussed in the EA and summarized below.

Context:

The Proposed Action focuses on livestock grazing management on 112,215 acres of public land intermixed with 12,595 acres of private land within the Hubbard Vineyard Grazing Allotment located on the eastern flank of the Snake Range in northeastern Elko County. The BLM first issued an Allotment Evaluation (AE) in 1997, with a revised and updated AE released in 2009. The permittee substantially changed livestock management practices on the allotment after the release of the 1997 AE, with a collaborative management process introduced in 1999. The 2009 AE reached draft conclusions that objectives were being met or progress towards attainment were being made.

Intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The analysis identifies both beneficial and adverse impacts to wetlands, riparian zones and aquatic and avian species of concern that may arise as a result of the proposed grazing permit renewal and range improvement projects. Measures are incorporated to avoid or reduce adverse impacts from grazing, conserve habitat for sensitive species, and identify and protect cultural resources.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The proposed action will have no effect on public health or safety.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The proposed plan incorporates procedures for the protection and management of historic and cultural resources and other unique areas in the Hubbard Vineyard Allotment. No park lands, special recreation management areas, prime or unique farmlands or wild and scenic rivers exist within the allotment. Wildlife habitat and wetlands, including springs and riparian areas, and the Badlands Wilderness Study Area have been monitored and analyzed for effects of grazing against established management objectives. The analysis concluded that implementing the proposed action is expected to provide for significant progress towards and/or attainment of the riparian and wildlife habitat standards and objectives throughout the allotment as defined by 43 CFR §4180. Management of the Badlands WSA is governed by the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review H-8550-1, Rel. 8-67, under which grazing is authorized as a grandfathered use in the Badlands WSA so long as the impacts of that use do not increase. The analysis presented in the EA concludes that the proposed action will not result in an increase in livestock use impacts within the Badlands Wilderness Study Area.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The analysis contained within the EA concludes that the proposed action will result in significant progress towards achievement of multiple use objectives and the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health. Ecological conditions on the allotment have shown consistent maintenance or improvement, and conditions are expected to continue to improve under the proposed action.

BLM did receive five comment letters during the public review period of the Environmental Assessment. These letters reflected a diverse range of viewpoints on management of the Hubbard Vineyard Allotment. Some comments supported the proposed action, while other comments favored some of the other alternatives or argued for further development of additional alternatives. Authorizing livestock grazing on public land has detractors but is considered an acceptable use under BLM's multiple use mandate and the resource management plan governing use for the Wells Resource Area (Wells Field Office).

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Possible effects are neither highly uncertain nor do they include unique or unknown risks. The analysis is based on monitoring information, and all livestock grazing authorizations are subject to applicable procedures to prevent undue environmental harm and risk.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The ten-year grazing permit includes terms and conditions to protect resources from significant adverse effects. The proposed action includes pasture specific seasons of use and establishes utilization and trend objectives to ensure that resource protection objectives are met. This action does not make any commitments for BLM approval for any future actions beyond those outlined in the proposed action. All future proposed livestock management actions not described in the proposed action would continue to be subject to further consideration in accordance with BLM grazing and NEPA regulations and policies.

All resources are evaluated for cumulative impacts in the EA, and no significant impacts are identified. As a standard procedure, cumulative impacts would continue to be subject to further review as new projects are proposed, and on a site-specific basis.

The proposed action incorporates Project Procedures to identify and protect significant cultural resources from adverse effects.

No listed species are known to occur within the Hubbard Vineyard Allotment, and no critical habitat for any species has been designated in the area. As discussed for “special status species” in the EA, the allotment does provide habitat for two candidate species (Columbia spotted frog and greater sage-grouse) and several BLM-sensitive species of concern. The proposed action includes measures to prevent adverse impacts to these species and to conserve their habitats and is not expected to result in the listing of any species of concern.

The proposed action has been developed and reviewed in coordination with applicable agencies to ensure its consistency with plans and requirements of other Federal, State and local agencies.

January 6, 2011
Date